

ACCESS

VIDEO

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S.B.S.
Video Plus
Open
Channel

The First Five Years

P.A.C.T.

PACT REPORT 1978/79

An appraisal of the first year of the PACT campaign

The Public Action for Community Television Committee was established in June 1968. Since then, we have proceeded slowly and steadily to develop community support for CTV.

PACT's aim is to promote and develop feasible models for community television, promote community debate on developments in all sectors of broadcasting, and work towards the establishment of community television stations in Australia.

To this end PACT has been liaising at both national and local levels. Of particular note has been the establishment of the Community Television Sub-Committee of the Public Broadcasting Association of Australia at the 1978 National Conference.

PILOT PROGRAMMES

Completed programmes are the bread and butter of the CTV campaign. The following tapes have been completed:

- Video Plus One
- Television Generation
- It's a Long Way to Tipperary
- Good for Nothing

The first three are regarded as suitable pilot programmes, whereas the last tape is more accurately described as an access tape — a technically inferior tape. Some completed tapes have been purchased (eg *Dreamers of the Absolute*) and investigations are underway into the availability of rights to programmes (eg independent Australian films).

EDUCATION AND COMMUNITY DEBATE

An essential part of the PACT campaign has been to educate the community about the desirability of CTV. To further this end the following publications have been produced:

- Open Channel and Community Television
- The PACT Summary
- Commercial Television and Community Television
- Talking Back to Your Television Set
- Home-made Television

Submissions have been made to the Ethnic Review Panel ("From the Nar-

row to the Broad") and the 3CR inquiry ("Community Television — Freedom of Speech"). PACT members have spoken at meetings organised by the Quality of Life Committee of the Heidelberg Council, the Melbourne State Colleges, and Melbourne Boys Grammar School. Members have also been involved in the International Community Education Conference (Melbourne), Video Mayfair (Sydney) and The Fun Run Festival (Ivanhoe).

A paper, "Up Against the Satellite — Satellites and Community Television", was presented at the Domsat '79 Conference in Canberra. PACT organised its own community television conference in November 1978, and organised another one in July 1979 on behalf of the Public Broadcasting Association of Australia.

COMMUNITY LIAISON DEVELOPMENTS

PACT is focusing on developing productive relationships with the ethnic community, trade unions and the co-operative movement. These groups are seen to be particular beneficiaries of CTV and, therefore, could play a critical role in its implementation.

PACT convenes, and Open Channel is the secretariat for, the Community Television Sub-Committee of the PBAA. The sub-committee has representatives from video centres in Victoria, New South Wales and Western Australia. It is preparing a community television policy for the PBAA's annual conference in October 1979.

Regular contact has been maintained with the Minister for Post and Telecommunications, Mr Staley, and the Department of Post and Telecommunications, primarily through the PBAA. Since late last year, when the Minister was non-committed on CTV, he has now moved to a committed position on the desirability of CTV. Regular contact has also been maintained with the office of Senator Susan Ryan.

The future for community TV is positive. PACT has played an important and critical role in promoting the need for CTV in Australia. This role has been recognised by the PBAA and the Minister for Post and Telecommunications, Mr Staley. There are, however, several issues that need resolution.

SMALL AND CHEAP IS BETTER AND BEAUTIFUL

There is a view that CTV should either not compete or be seen to compete with ABC and commercial television. It is believed that small and cheap is better and beautiful. *This is not* accepted by and for public broadcasting in the USA, which has as many similarities to PACT's proposed CTV model for Australia as it has with the ABC. Furthermore, the experience of the cable stations in the UK, Channel 40 and Swindon Viewpoint, is that the small-scale has a small impact.

MAKING THE FEW THE MANY

Because of limited resources, the PACT project has reached too few people. Nonetheless much has been achieved with existing resources. At least, the first 12 months of work has provided a sound foundation for a broadening of the campaign.

Perhaps the most significant breakthrough has been the effective liaison that exists between PACT and the Ethnic Communities Council.

CONCLUSION

Discussions are underway concerning the reallocation of Open Channel's production resources so that more pilot programmes can be produced. It is clearly unsatisfactory to rely as much as we have on volunteer effort to produce a satisfactory number of good pilot programmes. PACT looks forward to 1979/80 as a year of significant developments in community television in this country.

A special note of thanks to PACT's Co-ordinator, Robert Randall, for his hard work, enthusiasm and dedication. Thanks are also due to the following for their volunteer work on PACT tapes — Stephen Skok, Ray Harris, Grant Davis, Stephen Goddard and Frank Bendinelli.

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